



AmeriCorps

2023-24 ECO AmeriCorps

Watershed Planning Communications Specialist

Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps is an AmeriCorps program within the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC). ECO AmeriCorps is funded in part by an AmeriCorps state grant provided through SerVermont from the Corporation for National & Community Service. Service sites will provide meaningful service opportunities, regular supervision with oversight of service hours and timesheets, office space and office equipment, orientation to the worksite, additional training (as needed) and mileage reimbursement. The 2023-2024 program will begin mid-September 2023 and end in August 2024.

To be considered, service sites must:

- Demonstrate a commitment to DEIJ principles and provide a pathway for involvement at the host site and program level.
- Be a non-profit, municipality, state agency, tribal government, or educational institution.
- Provide a position description showcasing activities that are appropriate to the mission of ECO AmeriCorps.
- Provide a work environment that is ADA compliant, drug-free, and carries supplies and equipment necessary for members to perform their duties.
- Be able to provide the cash match and mileage reimbursement at the federal General Services Administration (GSA) rate for service-related travel for the member.
- Attend a supervisor orientation and be available for a minimum of two subsequent site visits and check-ins from ECO AmeriCorps staff.
- Clarify any additional responsibilities to the member according to your organization's policies.
- Notify ECO AmeriCorps staff about conflicts or other issues as they arise.

Other Requirements and Responsibilities:

- Confirm member selection, on-site training, member supervision and support throughout term of service, other forms and documentation as required by AmeriCorps, mileage reimbursement for service-related travel.
- Main supervisor must attend AmeriCorps supervisor orientation (or make special arrangements).

Host Site cost based on # of full-time employees:

Full-Time (1,700 hours over 11 months)

- 0-3 \$8,000
- 4-10 \$9,000
- >10 \$10,500

Half-Time (900 hours over 6 months)

- \$5,250 regardless of size

Quarter-Time (450 hours over 3 months)

- \$2,625 regardless of size

For more information about the application:

- Visit the ECO Website for supporting documents: www.ecoamericorps.org
- Or contact Program Supervisor, Dustin Bowman, dustin.bowman@vermont.gov, 802-461-5222

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation is sponsoring AmeriCorps positions through its AmeriCorps Program. The State of Vermont is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Positions are open to all applicants without regard to race color, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, veteran's status, religion, or creed.

Name of Organization or Municipality:

State of Vermont, DEC, Water Investment Division

Address of Organization or Municipality:

1 National Life Drive, Davis 3, Montpelier

Primary Supervisor Name and Title:

Chris Rottler, Water Investment Coordinator

Primary Supervisor's email:

chris.rottler@vermont.gov

Primary Supervisor's phone #:

8024616051

Please provide a brief description of your role at your site:

Technical project manager of Act 76 formula grants; WISPr project manager

Full-Time (September-August)

Describe your proposed service project.

[Note: performance measures are based on improved acres of public land, improved miles of waterways or trails, number of Vermonters provided environmental stewardship education or

training, and number of members placed in green jobs after completing their AmeriCorps service. Capacity- building activities are allowed. Please describe any projected impact.]

The core duties of this position is to engage with watershed stakeholders on water quality challenges and solutions, in a groundbreaking initiative that is the first of its kind in the nation. One of the most important ingredients to building healthy watersheds is clear communication. When stakeholders understand the issues and how to address them, they are empowered to take action. The Watershed Planning Communications Specialist (WPCS) will engage both with Watershed Planners, as well as on implementation of Act 76 (with CWSPs) and the WISPr sponsorship program. Serving with Planners and guided by the WPP Communication and Engagement Plan as well as the Communication SOP, the Specialist will support communications with internal and external stakeholders and the community. Through our Tactical Basin Plans, Story Maps, public meetings, website, and social media the WPCS will play an important role in assuring that Vermonters understand how the state of Vermont protects and restores surface waters and how to engage in the planning process and support these efforts. In addition, they will help engender confidence in our approach. They will also assist with the incorporation of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles to ensure we provide all community members with the opportunity to participate and learn about our process to all community members. The Specialist will enhance our ability to solicit input from the public and statutory watershed partners by developing compelling messages and finding the appropriate tools to reach them. Work will include updating: website communications, the basin planning public survey, and public meeting materials as well as the CEP. Evaluating success through the review of social media metrics and response from public survey and meeting input identifying non-point source water quality restoration project sites, therefore expanding the opportunity to identify such sites through public input. The Specialist will also help the Watershed Planning Program host public meetings, participate in field days, and attend trainings and collaborative meetings in the field with watershed partners throughout the state as time allows. For Act 76 work, the Specialist will set up and coordinate trainings for CWSPs and their councils, support communications and outreach with stakeholders, and problem solve specific policy questions - such as how to engage CWSPs, their councils and the public in the basin planning process.

What data collection tools will the member use to record the impacts of their service activity?

The number of WISPr projects supported and their cost will be documented. Outreach activities initiated/supported can also be tracked. People reached/engaged in clean water outreach efforts is also an important metric. The WPP's Communication and Engagement Plan also include performance metrics for each of the actions that the service member will assist with. The WPP also uses surveys to solicit input from the public.

Please provide any additional information (data, statistics, reports, etc.) that demonstrates the compelling need for the proposed position:

Watershed planning:

The WPP currently produces 15 Tactical Basin Plans every five years. These plans are used by Regional Planning Commissions, Natural Resources Conservation Districts, municipalities, local and statewide watershed groups, and the Agency of Natural Resources to identify and implement high priority clean water projects to protect and restore surface waters. In general, our basin plans are well known to our statutory partners, but not as well known to the public and when the public hears about them, they are not clear on how they should be interacting with them. Our public meetings to collect public comments on the

plans are not well attended (on average 8-20 people per meeting) and don't generate much constructive feedback. We'd like to involve people earlier in the process of the plan development and have a clear plan for outreach and how to use the correct materials to do the outreach. These plans direct funding for the highest priority projects while also highlighting the state's most important water resources. We'd like to ensure that people can easily participate in the planning process through a number of avenues since many can't (or choose not) to come out to public meetings. Public input is needed to understand impacts of degraded water quality on local communities, and also how to most effectively implement strategies to address these water quality issues which often requires participation of the public in supporting municipal projects and projects on private property. The more people engage in the planning process the more likely we are to be successful in achieving clean water goals. Integrating this outreach (on basin plans) with the new Act 76 Clean Water Service Provider Network is one of the areas for improvement that this position will work on. These plans also implement state TMDL goals which result in economic impacts when these goals are not met. We are currently able to track the number of projects completed as part of our basin planning process and the amount of funding awarded by basin. This information can be found in the Clean Water Performance Report (https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/erp/docs/2021-01-15_CleanWaterPerformanceReport_SF2020-FINA-PDF-A.pdf) in Appendix A and B, and also in our basin plan report cards. The State of Vermont invested over \$257million in clean water projects through grants, contracts and loans from SFY 2016 through 2021. Annual clean water investments in Vermont have increased four-fold during this timeframe. Also, as noted elsewhere, the Clean Water Service Providers will receive approximately \$7mm a year (aggregate) for implementing new clean water improvement projects.

Act 76 (Clean Water Service Delivery) Outreach and Communications:

The position will provide critical support for the Agency communication as it works to operationalize the funding and implementation of clean water projects through Act 76. Act 76 created seven Clean Water Service Providers that received a total of 7 million dollars each in funding in FY 2023 and in 2024 to implement clean water projects. A key component of Act 76 is the creation of Basin Water Quality Councils made up of 9 community members that act to prioritize projects based on phosphorus reduction potential and cobenefits which include DEIJ considerations. There is a need to support BWQC members in this work through organizing trainings, through newsletters, and by hosting an annual Act 76 summit that can support collective learning and sharing of knowledge among BWQC members and CWSPs to ensure that these funds are resulting in the maximum water quality and community benefits. This communication position would lead these communication efforts with support from Agency staff. This position will also lead the coordination of an annual summit for Act 76 stakeholders.

What initiatives does your organization take to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice (DEIJ)? Please include any historical data or details for on-going strategic plans, partnerships, and projects, as relevant.

Our Agency has an environmental justice committee, JEDI committee, and a Title VI committee that are each focused on developing and implementing relevant policies and procedures related to equity, inclusion, and diversity. Furthermore, a number of our Divisions, including the Watershed Planning Program, recently participated in a months-long training on Equity, Inclusion and Diversity offered by a nationally recognized consultant. Our Department has two representatives on the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Diversity and Equity Committee that was established in January 2020. The mission of the committee is to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) for marginalized groups among our coworkers and stakeholders, the public, and Vermont's ecosystems through dialogue, collaboration, community building, and education. One of the outcomes of this project is to identify how basin planning can do a better job meeting the mission of the committee by integrating JEDI principles in our approach.

We hope this position will collaborate with us on this new process moving forward. We are hoping this position will also help to support inclusion of JEDI principles in the implementation of Act 76.

Outline how DEIJ principles can be incorporated into your organization's work moving forward. (Provide examples of any trainings, workshops, projects, partnerships, etc.)

The communication plan and the new technical assistance provided by the SOP, allow for a more intentional approach to outreach. Even without the plan, we already had the interest to extend our understanding of DEIJI communities, resulting in the organization of a training discussion this summer with Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan Abenaki on their perspective on water and Lake Champlain. The WP have also begun to reach out to Missisquoi Bay Abenaki during a basin planning process. Ongoing engagement with the Abenaki and other indigenous tribes is a goal for the WPP in implementing Act 76, with opportunities for further trainings and collaboration in the future. Additional outreach and engagement that targets BIPOC communities is also important within the context of our community outreach efforts.

Describe specific challenges that your organization has faced while integrating DEIJ Principles.

The Department is working through the implementation logistics related to the passage of the new environmental justice bill, with implementation currently being discussed by upper management and our legal counsel. How this new law will affect our work is a work in progress. We are aware that our existing actions to communicate and engage the public is often limited to people who are already involved in clean water issues, leaving out those who have little knowledge or energy to devote to involvement in the process. We expect that disadvantaged communities (BIPOC, low to moderate MHI, limited English proficiency/new Americans) are not participating at nearly the same rate as others.

How will the ECO member be included or supported in on-going or future DEIJ work at the organization, if they so choose?

The ECO service member will have opportunity to support community outreach and engagement with BIPOC and other disadvantaged communities throughout Vermont, to ensure the meaningful participation of all Vermonters in our water quality planning. Additional involvement in the Departments' EJ and DEIJ work may also be appropriate, depending on the policies developed by DEC leadership. Our program is always interested in learning more about DEIJ and EJ, and welcome diverse voices to apply for this position and contribute their perspectives to our important community engagement, planning, and project development work.

Does the supervisor have adequate time and leadership experience to manage an ECO member? Please explain how:

The supervisor (Chris Rottler), has experience as an EcoAmericorps mentor and supervisor, supervises another position within the WPP, is a Certified Vermont Public Manager, has completed the Agency's Leadership and Management training program, is a longstanding member of the Department's Environmental Justice committee, and has experience teaching at the collegiate level. The supervisor will prioritize supervision and support of this position, being mindful to provide meaningful opportunities for growth.

Will the member have access to networking opportunities in this position? Please explain:

With a focus on communications with the Watershed Planning Program, the Specialist will have access and exposure to a wide variety of professionals within state government, including the communications staff of other departments, especially as part of the ANR social media team. In addition, they will have networking opportunities with state partners and the community, as a way to gain expertise in areas of communication or natural resource interests. They will hear from community members during public meetings and by shadowing WP in their meetings where there is interest. They will also have the opportunity to meet staff from all Departments in the Agency of Natural Resources, Regional Planning Commissions, Natural Resource Conservation Districts, local and statewide watershed groups, sister Agencies (AOT, AAFM), federal partners (USFWS, USFS, NRCS), and municipalities on a regular basis which are all active partners in tactical basin plan development. The member will have the opportunity to interact with and solicit feedback from these groups during field work, coordination meetings, and while implementing the CEP.

Does your organization currently host or plan to host an AmeriCorps member from another program? If yes, briefly describe the duties of this other position.

Our Division hosted an AmeriCorps member in the WPP program this year, and has historically hosted a member in the Clean Water Initiative Program for a number of years. The ECO in WPP for 23-24 will continue the work of our current ECO with communications support, outreach, and engagement.

Please list any clothing/equipment the member will need that you cannot provide (e.g., hiking boots, waders, raingear, etc.). Is a reliable vehicle expected? As the host site, you are responsible for providing all tools and technical equipment needed for the position (e.g., computer, phone, GPS, etc.).

Most field service will be in a meeting environment, although, some meetings could take place at a project site, which would require appropriate gear (hiking boots, appropriate clothing for the weather). A reliable vehicle would be needed when traveling to the main office in Montpelier. Clothing and gear for the days out in the field - backpack, waterproof boots that are comfortable to walk in, waders (we may be able to provide these when needed), rain coat and pants, hiking boots, backpack to carry food, water, and note taking materials, sun screen, and bug spray. *If the candidate is unable to provide this equipment, we will do the best we can to accommodate them. This should not affect their ability to carry out the essential functions of this position. None of this equipment is required for the primary in-office service.

Is there someone in your organization's network that might be interested in mentoring your ECO service member? *Note, 1-2 hours per month, not required

Yes

Are you willing to search with program staff over the summer to help your ECO member secure affordable and safe housing?

Yes

Many of our members are not from Vermont and are seeking a sense of community away from home. In what ways would you be willing to help them establish community connections? (Housing, peer networks, affinity spaces, local resources, fun places to go)

Our team will support the ECO with recommendations, networking and other outreach as best we can.

Water Quality and Trail Improvement - Please project Impact Numbers on miles of river/stream/trail treated and/or improved.

2

Land Conservation and Remediation - Please project impact numbers on acres of public parks or other public, publicly managed or tribal lands improved.

10

Community Engagement Outreach and Education - Please project number of individuals receiving environmental stewardship education or training.

300+

Sponsoring Organization's Mission:

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's mission is to preserve, enhance, restore and conserve Vermont's natural resources and protect human health for the benefit of this and future generations.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position:

This is a communications support position for the Watershed Planning Program, providing communications and outreach support, including technical assistance, development of material and coordination of events to our Watershed Planners and Investment staff.

Essential Functions. Functions that applicant must be able to perform. These may be listed in bullet form:

1. Develop a personal service plan with the Watershed Planner and Act 76 coordinator
2. Using the Communication and Engagement plan (CEP) as well as the Communication SOP as guidance, work with staff to:
 - a. Evaluate and update program website pages (as time allows) (training will be provided)
 - b. Evaluate and update the basin planning public survey template (using Microsoft Forms)
 - c. Improve the public meeting model for basin plan outreach using Microsoft Teams, PowerPoint and ArcGIS Story Maps (online training available for Story Maps)
 - d. Develop education and outreach posts to watershed planning social media platforms (using Instagram and Facebook).
 - e. Collect and report on WPP social media metrics, and CEP performance measures and lead a WPP discussion to identify areas of improvements.
 - f. Review and suggest any needed revisions to the CEP and education and outreach products to ensure inclusion of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles and identify opportunities to extend outreach to meet principles.

- g. Based on the reviews of how well communication has met identified performance measures, lead the WP in process to improve communications, and update the CEP.
- h. Represent the WPP on the ANR social media team, provide quarterly reports to WPP during program meetings on the teams activities;
- i. Support watershed planners in expanding the level of community engagement through two TBP kick off processes.
- j. Coordinate the outreach and coordination with partners for 2 TBP public meetings and other outreach techniques to seek input on draft plans.
3. Organize and conduct communications with CWSPs, and their counsels, including in-person meetings, newsletters, trainings and an Act 76 summit and other engagement
4. Coordinate discussions with stakeholders and staff to develop solutions to Act 76 policy questions, such as how CWSPs and BWQCs can and should engage in basin planning and how CWSP and BWQC can increase DEIJ in clean water funding efforts including considerations for how to ensure projects with a DEIJ focus are being developed for funding consideration.
5. Coordinate and collaborate with Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) on their outreach and engagement initiatives (i.e. Clean Water Lecture Series, etc.)

What are the secondary functions? These are projects or tasks that may be accomplished as time allows or applicant's interests evolve.

Participate in field day activities and water quality monitoring (hiking in the forest, walking in stream channels, planting trees, driving state vehicles, taking notes and organizing into field day summaries) 2. Help Watershed Planners and Act 76 staff to host public meetings 3. Update and add projects to the Watershed Projects Database and potential QA/QC of new nForms (training included) 4. Attend staff meetings.

Desired Qualifications:

These are desired qualifications - if you feel like you have a strong connection to this opportunity, but may be lacking in an area (where you believe you can nevertheless still succeed in this work) please consider applying anyway. - Academic background in natural resources, environmental planning and/or communications (background in water quality is a plus!) - Experience developing communications materials, social media and surveys for environmental outreach - Understanding of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles and ability to apply these principles to develop materials that serve the VT community more fully - Experience using Microsoft Word, Microsoft Forms, Microsoft Teams, and ArcGIS Story Maps - Additional experience with Adobe Design or other software is a plus - Passion for conveying scientific information in a digestible format for the general public - Genuine curiosity of people and behaviors related to environmental issues - Willingness and interest in learning new techniques for communication - High level of comfort reaching out to and collaborating with watershed stakeholders and general public - Strong communication skills and attention to detail - Self-motivated individual who enjoys problem solving

Minimum Qualifications:

- Be a US citizen, a national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S.;

- Be at least 18 years of age upon entering the Pre-Service Orientation (there is no upper age limit);
- Be a high school graduate or have a GED certificate or be willing to work towards their GED as part of their service-year successful completion requirement. A member cannot have dropped out of high school to join AmeriCorps. If a member has a documented medical reason/professional opinion why they cannot finish high school, they might be eligible; call in this case;
- Has not been convicted of murder or sexual assault and is willing to undergo a National Service Criminal History Check;
- Must submit to Agency of Human Services checks, i.e. Adult Abuse and Child Abuse Prevention;
- Be committed to the ECO AmeriCorps program, and its ethic of service and personal and professional development of its participants;
- Have the ability and enthusiasm to drive to, attend, and participate in required trainings and events, and be prepared to drive up to 2-3 hours each way

Service Conditions (will the position be largely outside, office based, hybrid or seasonally/project dependent, in schools, etc.) *

This position is largely office-based, with most staff teleworking, while meeting in person 1 to 4 times a month.

Will the member have access to "vulnerable populations"? This includes youth, elderly and individuals with disabilities.

Yes

Time Requirements:

Full time: will need to complete a minimum of 1700 service hours, serving approximately 40 hours/week over the course of the 11-month service term, September 13, 2023 - August 9, 2024

Orientation and Training:

ECO will provide members with orientation at the beginning of the service term. Host sites are expected to provide additional on-boarding training as well. Throughout the service term, ECO will provide in-person and virtual trainings to members on a variety of topics.

Benefits:

- Education award of \$6,895 (pre-tax) upon successful completion of service
- \$23,000 Living Allowance, paid bi-weekly
- Training
- Childcare assistance, if eligible
- Health Coverage
- Access to AmeriCorps Alumni Network
- Student loan forbearance and interest payments, if eligible

Evaluation and Reporting:

Mid and final performance reviews, quarterly reports, weekly timesheets, and end of service survey.
Thank you for your interest in AmeriCorps!